

GRAY'S FERRY. THE NUN'S DOOM. THE BARON'S KNELL. LORD PERCY'S
DREAM. THE EASTERN PRINCESS. VELASCO, OR THE ELOPEMENT.

62.

GRAY'S FERRY,

WITH THE OLD FLOATING BRIDGE.

BY PERCIE H. SELTON.

Alas for bye-gone days! The march of improvement is removing, one by one, all the old haunts whither we were wont to resort, and soon there will be no link left to connect us with the past The destroyer's hand has been at work in the home of our childhood. The trees beneath which we played; the old wooden bridge over the stream; the arbor of trellis work in the garden; the orchard; the shady lane; the antique mill; even the house in which we were born, all, all have passed away and are not But such is the order of Providence in this world!

Among the relics of our forefathers which are still left to us, the old Inn at Gray's Ferry is peculiarly interesting. The erection dates back beyond the Revolutionary times; and even the green-house belongs to the last century. Here, when our grand sires wore queues, and their wives sported hoops and high heeled shoes, the denizens of Philadelphia were wont to resort, and many a wintry evening has this primitive inn resounded with mirth and festivity, sure accompaniments of an old fashioned sleighing party. But these days have gone forever. Of all the curiosities of the place the old inn alone stands. The floating bridge has disappeared ; the gardens have been

neglected; a modem hotel crowns the rock to the left; and-only a few aged trees, white with the mementos of the past, tell of the former glories of the place.

The accompanying view is executed from an original picture, representing the ferry and bridge as they stood in 1828, ere even a thought of the present improvements had been entertained. The place had then a romantic beauty which it has since lost. The old floating bridge, moreover, was a curiosity. Excepting a modern flooring, it was identically the same structure which the British threw across the Schuylkill river, at Market street, when they were in possession of Philadelphia. At the ferry itself, the enemy established an outpost, and many are the tales told of the ruthless deeds committed by the soldiery. Some of these have come down to our day, and, at a fitting time, we may while away an hour by narrating one or mere of them.

The new hotel, erected on the hill to the left of the picture, on the site where a private mansion once stood, has become, of late, as popular as its more humble rival was in the olden time. The new rail-road bridge, over which the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore railroad is carried, crosses the Schuylkill at this point, the western abutment resting on the cliffs that here frown over the river. The scenery, in the vicinity, is lovely and interesting.



63.

THE NUN'S DOOM.

By H. SYMMES.

Near the town of Aspfeitia, in the romantic land of Spain, stands a large, square, dark-looking house with nothing to relieve the barrenness of the high walls, but a few holes with gratings, and which bear the appearance rather of loopholes than of windows. It is scarce strong enough to be a prison; nor does it resemble a convent, from the absence of a steeple. The superstructure, which is in reality, however, a nunnery, crowns an eminence at the entrance of the town. There is something so gloomy about the tower—something so full of vague and awful mystery that I shuddered involuntarily when I beheld it: and when, some time afterward I came to learn one of the deeds which those gloomy walls had witnessed I was almost tempted to believe in supernatural influences, so vague and chill had been the emotion of horror which I felt on beholding that antique building for the first time.

The story was related to me by an old lady, who, in her youth, had been an inmate of this convent for many years. Never shall I forget the tone and gesture with which she spoke as follows:—

" There was a lady in our convent, who, during the two years that had elapsed since her arrival, had scarcely exchanged a word with any of the other nuns. She remained constantly secluded in her cell, excepting when summoned by the tolling of the bell to join in the devotions of the community in the choir. She was shunned and avoided by most of the nuns, who generally supposed that some terrible crime oppressed her conscience; for a calm and gloomy despair sat upon her pale brow, and gave a wild yet melancholy expression to her beautiful and dignified features. Her figure was lofty and noble, but emaciated with suffering. Her prayers and religious duties were repeated and performed with usual fervor.

" Often had I remarked, with feelings of commiseration, her wasted form thrown into an attitude of humble and earnest supplication; her pale though beautiful features formed into an expression of the most poignant grief; her eyes raised to Heaven, and dimmed by burning tears. Thus she would long

remain, with her arms crossed upon her breast, and motionless as a statue, with the exception of a convulsive quivering of her lips. Suddenly she would throw herself upon the ground in a paroxysm of despair, and sob aloud, pronouncing some inarticulate words, as if complaining of her total incapacity to quell the fearful tempest raised within her breast by the conflict of opposed and unconquerable feelings. Again would she strive to raise her heart to God; but in vain. She found no relief in prayer; and, in her utter hopelessness, finding that even 'Religion could not mitigate her torments, she would fall exhausted, and lie extended, on the ground, deep sighs rending her bosom, and invoking death to put an end to her miserable and wretched existence.

" Compassionating her sufferings, I essayed to offer her some consolation. She was moved by the sincere expression of my pity, and perceived that I also was unfortunate. The similarity of our feelings and misfortunes instinctively drew us toward each other, and I soon gained her friendship, and learnt the cause of her grief.

" Her name was Amelia; she was the daughter of the Count of B-. Her crime had been the forming of a strong attachment toward a young officer in the army —a man of strict honor and principle, but whose family and prospects were unfortunately beneath the notice of the proud Count of B-, who would have thought himself disgraced by such an alliance. He forbid his daughter to speak to her lover, or even to think of him; she entreated; he sternly repeated his commands and left her; he was disobeyed; the enraged Count brought her to the convent, and forced her to take the veil, threatening, if she refused, to cause the officer to be assassinated. This had determined her, and she saved her lover's life. at the sacrifice of her liberty and her happiness. For two long years she had struggled ineffectually to forget, and to offer to the God, to whom she had consecrated her existence, a heart pure and free from all worldly affections and regret. But, alas! never could she succeed in erasing from her heart the fond memory of her lover; which, notwithstanding all her efforts to the contrary, continued to hold entire

possession of her soul. His image haunted and pursued her every where. It was in vain for her to seek consolation in prayer; her thoughts would still wander away from her God, and dwell upon her lover. And this constant conflict between love and religion—the fond recollections of the past lost to her for ever, and the torments to which she imagined herself to be doomed for the future—was the canker which wore and wasted her form, and withered strength, whilst the burning fever within her breast raged on unabated.

" Months flew, and time but increased her sufferings: all hope had long deserted her. One day, she had remained alone in the choir, after the termination of the evening prayers; she was, as usual, imploring for mercy and relief. Her meditation was interrupted by her hearing her name pronounced distinctly, though in a whisper. She listened, and heard it again ; she started, rose, looked down into the church, and remained thrilled with emotion; supported by a pillar, to which she clung, for she recognised, by the last gleam of twilight—Yes— she could not be mistaken—she recognised her lover. Fearful of detection, he threw a letter into the choir, over the lattice-work, and disappeared. She was weak enough to read it. It said, that by her father's influence, he had been sent on board of a vessel, which took him to the Havanna, where he was appointed to a regiment. He had petitioned in vain for leave to return to Spain, and even for his discharge from the service. Both had been refused. Unable to live without her, he had, at last, sacrificed everything, even his honor, to see her again. He had deserted, to find her on his arrival in Spain buried in a convent. He told her that it was impossible that God would accept of vows 'which force and fear alone had extorted from her—they could not be considered as binding. He conjured her, if she still loved him, to fly with him to a foreign land; to repay the sacrifice he had made for her with a similar sacrifice; and, then, they would pass the rest of their days in retirement, in peace, and happiness.

" He promised happiness, when nothing could exceed the wretchedness of her existence—when she felt that even death itself would be unable to

erase him from her heart. Was it possible that she could refuse?

" I assisted them in their flight, which was effected with the greater facility, as not the slightest suspicion was entertained of such an attempt being in contemplation. The anxiety of avoiding pursuit made them take to the mountains. Being unprovided with a guide, they lost their way, and wandered until the horse that bore them, fell exhausted. They proceeded on foot, and having at last met with a shepherd, they persuaded him to guide them. They pursued their weary journey, and after walking all day and night, their eyes were gladdened by the sight of the French frontier. A few minutes more, and they would be safe! At this moment, they perceived with horror a detachment of troops, that had been despatched in their pursuit, upon the discovery of Amelia's escape being made known in the convent. They still strove to go on, straining every nerve; but their wearied limbs tottered beneath them. The troops came up, overtook, and surrounded them. Amelia's lover, driven to madness by this disappointment, began to use his weapons furiously in her defence, but a bullet laid him dead at her feet. She then lost all recollection. Upon recovering her senses, Amelia found herself again in the convent. Before she could collect her thoughts, and awaken from the confusion of what she imagined but a horrid and indistinct dream, she was summoned before the tribunal, assembled with conformity with the rules of the Order, to try and condemn her on a charge of sacrilegiously breaking her vows and profanating the sanctity of the convent"

Fatigued by the exertion she had undergone, my narrator fell back upon her chair, and it was in a voice almost indistinct from its weakness, that she added,

" You guess her doom?"

" Perhaps," I suggested, " the poor girl was confined to a comfortless cell?"

A ghastly smile came over the features of the old lady; a smile in which

there was something horrible and painful to see. She again sat erect in her chair, placed her head on my shoulder, and approaching her face to my ear, she said, in a low, hissing whisper, which thrilled me to the heart, and made me shudder, "she was built up in the cavity of a wall, and left THERE —to die."

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67.

VELASCO, OR THE ELOPEMENT.

By A . W. NONEY.

" T is but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague!"

Dona Constanza de Tolosa sat by the window of her apartment gazing upon a rich and lovely landscape, whose summer verdure, slightly tinged with the golden bloom of early autumn, was then sweetly glowing in the mellow radiance of the moon. She held in her hand a beautiful half-blown rose that had been thrown unobserved into the room, upon one of the leaves of which was written the laconic communication—" Le amo de corazón — Velasco !" Over this she had long wondered without having the slightest idea whence it came, or for what purpose it might be intended, except to excite her wonder, as she was unacquainted with the name of " Velasco/ and also unconscious of having ever attracted the admiration of a stranger. But her eyes were now tracing the course of the gracefully winding Tagus whose tranquil waters, glittering like molten silver, flowed within a few yards from beneath the. casement, thence brightly onward amidst groves and vineyards until lost to her view in the distance; yet her thoughts were wandering back

through the green vista of girlhood to those sunny hours when she, a gladsome child, roamed in careless gayety along its fertile banks, plucking bright flowers to wreath in her dear mother's hair, and dreaming of naught save the future joys that were in store for her. She was happy then, aye, truly so! She felt the reality now of those blissful scenes which had seemed only | glimpses of happier days to come; for since then she had strown the last flowers she could bear to pluck thence over that dear mother's grave; and there was now neither parent or kin left in the wide world to love her. She felt that her fate was lonely and friendless, even though she remained the sole heiress of a proud and wealthy house, and was also possessed of beauty and attractions that might readily have enabled her to rank peerless above the loveliest maidens of Spain's sunny clime. Yet these were as nothing—for they yielded her no pleasure; while they were as dross compared to the wealth of affection pent up within her pure bosom, and yearning to gush forth in one clear stream of rapture at the feet of some beloved object.

Placed, while yet a child at her mother's death, under the care of Senor Lopez, a stern guardian, she had been kept as it were, a lovely flower to deck his own alcova with the watchful jealousy of a lynx-eyed Argua; who seemed ever fearful that the world might rob him of his treasure—the interest of her estate, his fee in guardianship. He had kept her almost estranged from society, with little more freedom than the privilege of gazing, as now, from the windows of her dreary prison-house upon the bright scenes around, from whose enjoyments she 'was tyrannically shut out; but when nearly placed by her years above this surveillance, he was fain to relax somewhat the vigilance with which he had hitherto guarded her from the snares and temptations of the world; and she at times ventured forth, like a bird from its cage, to taste the sweets of liberty, though ever accompanied in her wanderings, that she might not even then be free from restraint

While thus enwrap with saddened reflections of the past, joined with doubtful anticipations of the future, the tones of a guitar, playing a light and

happy air, reached her ears, and attracted her attention. Turning in the direction whence they proceeded, she observed a small pinnacle sailing gently down the stream, passing as she supposed from the villa above. To her extreme surprise, when arriving opposite her window, it turned in toward the shore, while its occupant observing her arose and bowed—then touched a few notes on his instrument and sang the following:—

A wand'rer return'd to my home once again;

In my own native valleys so dear,

I've found a rich treasure I sought for in vain,

Through all the wide world save my beautiful Spain,

Unconscious the jewel was here;

By the banks of her sweet flowing stream—

And pure as its wave's limpid gleam.

I've roved from the West to India's bright shore,

From North to the South ever free;

But ne'er had I seen when my travels were o'er.

As I turn'd to my home to wander no more,

A maiden so lovely as thee;

Thou brightest of earth's fairest daughters—

A queen by my own Tagus' waters.

I've gazed on the charms of the "Maids of Cashmere,"

And glanced in their "love-lighted" eyes;

Yet their light ne'er shone with a magic so dear,

Nor their beauty so sweet as thine doth appear,

Thou flower of my own native skies;—

Freshly blooming in fragrance and pride,

By the margin of Tagus' clear tide.

I love thee! I love thee! with heart and with soul!

And passion as ardent as free!

Which aye may endure without check or control,

Ever changelessly true while Tagus shall roll.

Its bright swelling waves to the sea.

Ah! tell me not in vain do I woo!

And bid me, sweet angel, adieu!

The Dona listened with delightful astonishment to the words of the song,

deeming them very flattering, though perhaps a little extravagant. His voice had a manly sweetness in it that captivated her ear; while the graceful dignity of his bearing gave assurance that he was of a superior order to the common-place caballeros whom she usually saw passing and repassing up and down the river; and the fervent air and tone with which he sang, caused an undefinable sensation to arise within the breast, while her warm heart increased its pulsations, as if thrilling under some rapturous excitement.

He had scarcely finished, however, when she was startled by a sudden knocking at her chamber door, and the voice of Senor Lopez, who bade her close the casement immediately and retire to her couch. Reluctantly obeying the imperious mandate, she waved a grateful acknowledgment to the handsome cavalier, who bowed with ardent respect as she vanished from his sight; and then she sought her 'couch—but not to sleep. Her thoughts had now a more agreeable subject for meditation, and she reflected upon it with sanguine and delightful anticipations. A new life seemed dawning upon her— a life of love and happiness, in which is comprised woman's chief existence; and a still small voice whispered to her heart that its yearnings were not all in vain—that it might yet pour out its treasures without reserve, and receive a grateful return, while the world would be no longer to her so lonely and dreary as it had ever seemed since her mother's death.

Slumber at length closed her eyelids, and her dreams were of a most blissful nature, for they imaged forth visions of love and lovers singing and playing amid rosy bowers, while her unknown "Velasco" appeared to be their king, and still paid all homage to her—choosing her out from among the loveliest to be his bride and queen. Her breast seemed thrilling with an almost suffocating feeling of rapture, and her heart swelling full, nearly to bursting with the intensity of its joys, until arriving as it were at the summit of bliss, those bright fancies were suddenly dissipated by the entrance of a hideous dragon amidst that fairy scene to fright her from its enjoyment. She awoke, and her thoughts reverted back to the incidents of the evening previous, while they seemed almost too delightful for reality, and she could hardly

convince herself that they were not also a portion of her dream. But there lay the rose withering upon her toilet, to which she ran and read over and over again the sweet confession that "Velasco! loved her with all hie heart!" She was satisfied that had been no delusion, and with an indescribable expression of delight and wonder blendingly depicted upon her sunny features, she pressed the mute messenger to her coral lips, and smiled as if its very fragrance breathed of love.

"He loves me! he loves me!" she exclaimed in the exuberance of her joy, which was, however, immediately checked by a more serious reflection. "But who is it that loves me?" she musingly asked herself. "Who is Senor Velasco?" She could not imagine whom he might be, for she had never heard the name, and was therefore unable to conclude whether he was a noble, or hidalgo—though he must be a perfect gentleman, or he would never have devised such an exquisitely romantic mode of expressing his passion to her. "And does he really love me?" She mused; but this, the more she reflected upon it, seemed as puzzling as the rest, for how was she to determine whether he intended it all as some mere passing act of gallantry, or. was sincere in his professions! Yet even then it was bliss to believe the doubtful equivocation, that "lies like truth."

From morn till night, the image of that handsome cavalier, and the flattering words of his song, so occupied her mind that she could think of little else; while she sat humming over; the pleasing air, and gazing upon the place where she last saw him wafting kisses toward her on the wings of night, and as intently as if he were still visible to her sight. Her Wakeful fancies now conjured up dreams again similar to her midnight vision; but they were also doomed to be dispelled by a phantom equally as horrible—and appearing more like reality than the former.

Three days afterwards, Senor Lopez congratulatingly informed her that she was a betrothed bride! and that her marriage would take place in the course of a few short weeks! She was astonished! aye, utterly confounded by the

unexpected intelligence; and sooth there was indeed ample reason, for this was the first intimation she had received of such being a probable occurrence. However, after the first shock of the startling communication had passed over, she began to console herself with the reflection that it must be "Velasco" who had thus suddenly proposed for her; but as her guardian continued, she nearly fainted with the sudden reaction which chilled her hopes.

"You see, my dear, Don Emanuel, who is a nobleman at Madrid, has written to me, soliciting the honor of your hand in marriage. Knowing well his state and importance, I returned him my consent immediately."

"But you could not give him my consent!" said she in a tone of deep reproach.

"Oh, no! you will give that as a matter of course!" he replied, laughing, without appearing to think that she could have the slightest objection to so advantageous a match.

Dona Constanza felt ready to weep with indignation; but womanly pride sustained her, and she returned in a tone that was intended to signify her firmness, though ! her voice was tremulous with emotion. "Then, Senor, as a matter of course , I will not give my consent; but will rather enter a convent than marry Don Emanuel— even though he were the king himself!" And «he turned quickly from the presence of her mercenary guardian toward her chamber, there to give relief to her sorrows and vexation by a flood of tears. She was very angry with him for such impertinent officiousness; as indeed what young maiden would not have been, thus to be disposed of, like a horse or a slave—to have a husband selected and agreed upon, and her own approval and consent to an arrangement, usually the most important of any in woman's life, deemed of very little account —but to follow, however, as a "matter of course." She knew nothing of Don Emanuel, except that his name

had been casually mentioned once or twice in her hearing as a gentleman of high rank in Madrid, but who had spent of late some years abroad. He might be old and ugly for all she knew to the contrary; and his very name sounded as if it belonged to a cross and stupid old bachelor. "What care I for his state and importance]" she exclaimed, pettishly, as these words recurred to her mind, "I could not love him if he were made of gold and jewels!"

Nor could she have loved him while her heart was preoccupied by the graceful image of another—that of her mysterious serenader; whom, however, she had not seen since that eventful evening of his first appearance. This seemed very strange to her, as she nightly watched eager and anxiously hour after hour for his dearly anticipated reappearance; but in vain. She felt it indeed singular, yet she could not believe that such a noble looking gentleman would play falsely merely to deceive a simple maiden—kindling an undying flame in her bosom, and then vanishing as mysteriously as he came, leaving it to rage and consume her heart unheeded. Some accident must full surely have befallen him, or he would have sought an interview with her long before;— and she wept with deep anguish at the thought.

But whether "Velasco" came or not, she was fully resolved to oppose her tyrannical guardian's plan, even though the laws of her country might leave her no alternative between a compliance with his wishes and a living burial within a convent's walls, if he chose to enforce her marriage before she was free from his control. She rightly deemed that he had sinister views in thus contracting her without her own consent, and to an utter stranger; for he shrewdly inferred that the magnificent Don, from the immensity of his own wealth, would be more than likely to overlook some few discrepancies which had occurred in the management of his ward's estate, either through negligence or design on his part.

However, he said nothing further to her upon the subject, knowing that it

would but increase the evident antipathy she felt towards the match; while the Don himself could perhaps better second his efforts, when he arrived, by the splendor and pomp of his state—and a very little gentle enforcement, if the necessity of the case should strongly demand such proceeding. Yet he deemed it proper to inform him that his ward manifested a slight reluctance in agreeing to such a sudden proposition, from being doubtless a little piqued that he had not addressed her at the first. Still that gentleman's reply expressed no discouragement; but rather increased ardor, as if her maiden spirit raised her worth in his estimation, and he was therefore resolved to win her if possible.

It was on the evening previous to the day when the presumptuous suitor to her hand was expected to arrive, that the Dona sat in her chamber with her spirits weighed down by the most gloomy reflections. She had given up all hope of ever seeing "Velasco" again; and yet she could not banish from her heart the lasting impression that his manly beauty, assisted by the romance attached to his actions—had made upon it. In the fervid clime of Spain love does not require years of sunshine and showers to arrive at maturity. It is there in her verdant fields, amidst orange groves and rosy bowers, a flower of magic growth, and requires neither care or attendance ; but springs at once into bloom, seeking its own nourishment of the soil from whence it takes its life. From sad imaginings with regard to the stranger who was the object of her affections, her thoughts reverted with loathing to the still stranger person, who was equally the object of her abhorrence; and with whom her guardian would heartlessly force her to wed, if she did not take some decided step to thwart his purpose. Though she had not yet determined upon any definite plan of proceeding, she was fully resolved that the haughty Don should not even see her when he did arrive, and he might return again to Madrid, if he chose, as wise as he came, and quite as empty, for all he was likely to gain of her.

While thus sitting and revolving in her mind the woes that afflicted her soul, she heard, as she imagined, the same tinkling notes which had sounded so

sweet to her enraptured ears upon the night when "Velasco" sung to her of his admiration and love. Rushing to the window, to assure herself, she saw him floating gently by; and, carried away with the enthusiastic transport of her feelings she waved her hand toward him in greeting, while her throbbing heart swelled full with delight. He kissed her in return, and then, signifying by a gesture that they might not speak through fear of being overheard, he approached toward the shore, and tossed a letter attached to a pebble, into her apartment. Catching it eagerly up, she read by the light of a taper its contents ; and then, with an almost overpowering feeling of joy, she returned to the window and waved him her unhesitating consent to the proposition contained within; while he passed silently away, wafting kisses toward her Until lost to view in the obscurity of night.

The letter was signed the same as his previous message to her, with the simple word "Velasco!" but its contents informed her that he was a gentleman of birth and station in life; and that having accidentally seen her one day in the villa, he had from that moment loved her with devoted ardor: yet he had been compelled to leave for Madrid at an early hour the next morning, and it was not then possible to seek an interview other than the serenade to which she listened one evening a few weeks previous. And now he deemed it too late for such unless she would consent to fly with him and thus avoid the union which her guardian wished to force upon her. He seemed wretched with despair, and implored her with all the deep and restless eloquence of true affection to comply with his wishes, and he would then ever love her, truly and fondly;—saying, also, that he had in his power every means of happiness, without the assistance of those which her guardian might unjustly withhold from her. And he concluded by requesting that if she consented to his dearest desires, to postpone with some plausible excuse the dreaded ceremony for a day, and he would be at her window on the succeeding night, ready to convey her with all possible speed to where the holy sacerdote should be in waiting to unite them forever.

After he was gone she returned and read and re-read those sweet lines,

which seemed to her like a reprieve from a doom worse than even death itself, until every letter was engraven upon her memory—never to be effaced; and then she folded it upon her heart and held it there, while she dreamed fell that blissful night of love again and her dear "Velasco."

The next day an unfortunate accident, as it was understood, delayed the arrival of Senor Lopez's expected guest; for which occurrence Dona Constanza felt, duly thankful, while she made secret preparation for her intended flight.

She did not feel any regret at the step she was taking, for she was bound by no ties to Senor Lopez, and he had ever been to her a cold-hearted and selfish oppressor. It was the climax of this course of conduct that now drove her forth, to find a protector in one who loved her, and to seek a refuge from bitter oppression; but as the evening approached, she felt nervous and sick at heart through doubt and anxiety. She had, however, a trusting confidence in the honor of Velasco, for every gesture and every word of his which she had read or listened to, bore the impress of love and sincerity. True, her acquaintance with him was very slight; but she was rendered desperate through love and constraint, and therefore proceeded to an extremity, which under other circumstances she would have hesitated in doing. While awaiting the arrival of "Velasco," she labored under the most gloomy forebodings, and half repented her hasty promise; but then as she thought of her hopeless situation, an occasional shudder would thrill over her frame, and renew again her failing resolution.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening, that she heard the whispered signal underneath her window, while her heart seemed ready to leap from her throat with trepidation. Summoning up, however, the little energy she could command at the moment, she stepped timidly forth over the balcony, and thence descended into her lover's arms, who quickly placed her on the boat in waiting, and pushed from the shore. He seated himself by her side and pressed her to his heart without speaking, while they were rowed swiftly

toward the Villa in whose suburbs her guardian's residence was situated; but had not proceeded far ere lights were seen and voices heard in pursuit, and they knew their flight had been discovered.

Too frightened to speak, Constanza clung closer to her lover, as if to implore his protection; but he merely smiled, in derision of their danger, and bade her fear nothing, for all would yet be well. They were too far advanced to be immediately overtaken, and thus reached the church in safety, where the reverend priest was in waiting to perform the nuptial rite. He commenced in haste, well knowing the urgency of the case; but the ceremony was soon interrupted by the stentorian voice of Senor Lopez, echoing in thunder to the lofty dome of the church, and reverberating amid those deserted aisles, as he shouted,

" Hold! on your life, holy father! and beware how you profane thus your sacred office!"

Then, drawing his sword, advanced to confront the bold abductor of his ward, who stood calm and unmoved, supporting her fainting form; but paused in utter amazement as he recognized his features, exclaiming, " Good God, Don Emanuel! Is it possible that you have resorted to such ignoble means to win your lady?"

" It is, Senor," replied Don Emanuel, smiling, " for I despaired of winning her otherwise. You know that she refused the proposal made through her guardian; therefore, I deemed it proper to gain my desires in the best manner possible. She is mine now, by her own free will; and I love her none the less, for thus proving to me the faith of her affection."

"Well, as you have won the perverse maiden against her desires, even though with her own free consent, the ceremony may proceed; and I wish my dear ward much pleasure, in thus having her own way in this important matter."

The parties were married; and then of course came an explanation of the mystery to Dona Constanza. Don Emanuel de Velasco, having seen her, as before stated, was immediately captivated with her beauty and sweetness ; but being imperatively called away to Madrid, he was obliged to submit by letter, a proposal for addressing her, to Senor Lopez, who closed at once with his desires; and unexpectedly, even went so far as to fix upon a day for the marriage, which he seemed to think, without doubt, would follow in a very short period. This surprised, while it gave him much pleasure, and he joyfully acquiesced in the arrangement; but when he understood that she firmly opposed the union, shrewdly deeming that she might be ignorant of his latter title, and encouraged by her seeming gratification at the previous manifestation of his love, he resolved to win her, if possible, under that name alone; and thereby assure himself not only of her free will, but of her affection for him also. The good priest was his only confidant.

while he trusted to have accomplished his design undiscovered.

It is needless, perhaps, to mention that the result of the elopement was gratifying to all the parties concerned, as it united Dona Constanza to her "Velasco," as well as to her guardian's "Don Emanuel;" and she had never reason to repent the hasty step, which, to appearance, was forced upon her.



71.

THE EASTERN PRINCESS.

By MRS. ANNE FORD.

The Princess Zelona was the most beautiful of her sex. She was gay as a bird, agile as the antelope, and tender as the dove. Her voice was like that of the bulbul, and her eyes were brighter than the stars that light the throne of the angel Amiram. She was the only daughter of a prince, who found a pleasure in gratifying her highest wishes. Her harem was celebrated throughout all the east. The most beautiful girls sang to her, incense of the costliest kind perfumed her room, the finest muslins of Deccan wrapped her delicate form, and every luxury which wealth could purchase or whim suggest was collected around her. Yet she was not happy. Amid all this magnificence she pined away, so that the lustre of her eye daily grew more dim, and the rose on her cheek faded. The Princess Zelona was to be married to a prince whom she hated, when her heart was given to another. Her destined lord was an old Rajah of immense possessions, and though her hither gratified her wishes in every other respect, on this point he was inexorable, and therefore her sadness. Deeming that her dejection would soon pass away when she was a bride, the parent paid little attention to her grief, but hastened the preparations for her nuptials.

She sat in her bower one day, surrounded by her slaves, who each tried in turn but uselessly to assuage her sadness. In vain they sang and played to her, in vain the sound of a cool fountain plashed on her ear, in vain they strove to entertain her with tales of love and romance, in vain she gazed out over the bright lake that stretched beneath her apartment, and in vain she sought consolation in that never-failing resource, her agate-mounted hookah, she found no relief for her dejection; so, at length, dismissing all her attendants but one, who had been with her from childhood, she threw herself back on her cushion, and bid the other sing her an old song which they had known years before when both were young, and she was happy.

" Ah!" sighed the princess, " how often have I heard Hyder sing that song in the green mountains where we were brought up together. Alas! that my father has taken me thence and brought me here to all this state and grandeur, which I despise since I cannot share it with Hyder."

"And why not fly from this hateful union t" timidly interposed her companion, " I have heard of such things from the story-tellers whom we used to hear, before your father had won this mighty kingdom, and when he was only a poor prince among the hills, such as Hyder is now."

" Fly!" said the princess, in astonishment, " oh! my father would never forgive me—but, but, indeed this marriage will kill me."

"I am sure" interposed the maiden, " I would never submit to it, when this young prince loves you so devotedly, and you love him in return. Have you seen him of late?"

" I caught a glimpse of him as he rode under my lattice four moons ago, when he was on a visit here—you know I could see him in no other way. How nobly— like the descendant of a hundred kings as he is—he bestrode his courser. Ah! would I could see him in this dilemma."

"And what would you say if you could hear from him? See," continued the maiden, looking cautiously around, to satisfy herself that no one was within sight or hearing. " I have a mission for you, written in his own hand. It has cost me a World of trouble to convey to you, and this is the second day I have waited for the opportunity."

The princess blushed to the bosom as she took the richly adorned missive and read the following:

"Do you love me yet? Then can you become a sacrifice I am poor, but I am the descendant of kings. If you will give up pomp, wealth, and power for my mountain home, I will find means to rescue you from your fate. If you are silent I shall know you still love me and are willing to be mine."

The color went and came in the princess' cheek, and her bosom heaved with

tumultuous emotions, as she read this letter. Concealing it in her bosom, she leaned her head on her hand and gave herself up to thought. In that crisis how her heart alternated between affection for her father and love for Hyder! But love triumphed and when she raised her head it was to tell her companion that there was no reply to send.

"Allah be praised!" said the maiden, "now I shall see you happy."

Meantime the preparations for the nuptials of the princess went on, and were eventually brought to a close. Day after day, relying on her lover's promise to save her, Zelona looked for his interposition, though she knew not in what way it would appear; but all in vain. Hope at length gave out, and she spent her hours in tears.

It was a bright summer morning when the bridal cavalcade set forth for the capital of the intended husband of the princess, but though everything around her was gay—though birds sang merrily from every branch, and joyous strains of music floated on the balmy air—her heart was filled with sadness and despair. At most two days journey would bring her to the capital of her lord. From Hyder she had received no intelligence, and who knew but what he might be dead, or have deserted her. Bitter were the tears she wept as she buried herself in her silken couch, for death seemed preferable to a union with her destined husband. When the cavalcade stopped for the night, she wept herself to sleep. But suddenly she was aroused from slumber by a wild confusion in the camp, and sitting up in her couch and listening, she heard shouts, and shots, the charge of spades, and the clash of sword-blades. These noises, at first distant, rapidly neared the rich pavilion in which she lay, and as they approached, what was her joy to recognise, over all the tumult, the war-cry of Hyder. Hastily ordering her affrighted slaves to robe her, she awaited, with a beating heart, the termination of the contest. Nor did she wait long. Directly a wild huzza rose up at the very door of her pavilion, and immediately she heard her lover's voice without. Rushing to the outer apartment of the tent she fell into

Hyder's arms as he entered it, flushed with victory.

" Oh!" she said, " why did you delay so long? I almost feared I should never see you again."

" I came as soon as I thought I could ensure success, dearest," he replied, kissing her beautiful brow, " I have lain in wait for the last fortnight, watching for this day. But there is no time to lose. On the first alarm a thousand spahis will spring into the saddle to pursue us. I have brought two fleet Arabians, who will carry us to our native mountains ere a second sun shall rise. Mount, sweet one, and away with me."

She mounted at the word, and ere two days the fugitives reached the wild and impassable mountain recesses in which the young prince had his home. Pursuit was found to be useless. Long and happily they lived together. At first the Rajah contemplated sending an army to recover his daughter, but just when all was prepared he fell sick, and better thoughts rose in his bosom. When he recovered -he sent for his children and adopted Hyder as the heir to his throne. And men, in that bright land, still talk of the blissful reign of Zelona and her lord.

73.

LORD PERCY'S DREAM.

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

It was a lovely summer evening. Darkness had crept almost imperceptibly over the earth. The moon was up in all her full robed glory, and the burning stars of heaven glittered like a coronet of countless jewels on the dark brow of night. There was not one cloudlet to dim the lustrous expanse of ether. Below it lay the beautiful landscape—beautiful in its calm repose, and in its

strong contrast of silver light and darkest shade. On the river—the noble - and broad swelling river—the moon's lustre was given back in one wide sheet of liquid glory, and as the stream faded away toward the thickly-wooded shore, the sound of the shadowed ripples dashing in mimic frolic against the pebbly bank, stole with the softening influence of music upon the soul. Save this, there was no sound upon the air, no wind to stir the myriads of forest leaves, or to bear away the sweet perfume of the fresh, wild flowers. It was a glorious night, yet one, that with no passing sound upon the air, nothing by which the gazer might be led to identify the place—had rather a tendency of abstracting thought, of luring it away from these still, calm scenes to others, either of reality or imagination.

And there was one, whose eyes were fixed upon the moonlight glories of the landscape, as if perchance to read some portion of his own fate from its illuminated page. From the wild turmoil of the camp, from the jarring discord of the soldiery, from the neigh of steeds, and the heavy tread of the sentry, he had stolen away to the borders of that mighty forest, beside the banks of that gently murmuring river.

Where a moss-covered rock threw out its jutting points here and there, presenting a rude seat of nature's own formation, with a velvet cushion to recline upon, and an emerald carpet of the softest texture, he had thrown himself wearily. With his hand upon his forehead and his hair thrown back, damp and dishevelled, he gazed upon the quiet moon. And little recked she, as she sailed onward in the deep sapphire heaven, that he, whose beaming eyes feasted upon her loveliness, was the proud scion of a most mighty lineage, the descendant of a long line of stately ancestry. Little recked she of the many anxious prayers sent up to Heaven on his account; of the fond mother who wept in deep bitterness, of the fair young sister whose tears commingled, and of the many noble friends whose heartfelt solicitude was enlisted for his welfare. The blood of a Percy coursed in the youthful veins of him who sat there alone in the stilly night, an heir to the proud Dukedom of Northumberland.

And never gazed the moon upon a fairer temple, on one more fitting to enshrine a high-born soul. There was a majesty of thought, an elevated tone of feeling dwelling upon the broad, fair forehead, and the curving fringes of the eyelash lay back upon it, disclosing the depths of soul they sometimes hid, the touching melancholy of those dark blue orbs. His cheek was pale now, very pale, contrasting forcibly with the wet and clustering hair that fell around it in its raven hue. There was a haughty splendor on the full curving upper lip, in the slightly dilating nostril: there was character stamped upon the mouth. This feature, the most expressive of the human face, seemed slightly inconsistent with the eyes and forehead. The upper lip, separate from its fellow, might appear to accord with these; but the union of both expressed forcibly that the reckless love of daring, the untamed wildness of the boy, had scarce given place to the more dignified demeanor of the man. His form, though slight,, was accurately and beautifully proportioned, extending to the medium height, and displaying symptoms of - nerve and activity almost beyond his years. The general disposition of the man might have been that of the frank, merry-hearted soldier, but sorrow and disappointment had given a deep- toned sadness to his expressive eyes, and touched with premature hand the manly beauty of his snowy brow.

Lord Percy's thoughts dwelt not with the landscape before him, but the influence of that scene had carried him afar into his own land ; the country of his love, his beautiful England. Before his vision, high rose the stately turrets of Alnwick Castle, its battlemented towers, its winding galleries and proud old halls, its fountains, its sculpture and its paintings. And even as he thought of these—holy and pure emotions, the fond endearments of home, the many blissful hours of childhood—thrilled with a powerful spell around his heart. Then came the memory of that mother, that loved and revered one, the brightest star in his boyhood's heaven, the soothing angel of his after griefs, his beautiful and stately mother. Oh! for one look upon her face, one kiss from her fond lips, one blessing on his head—how much would he have given? A stranger in a strange land, a soldier in the wars of his

country—just wars as he had once considered them, but oppressive as he could not but confess them now.

"Mother," he murmured, "I was wrong, my mother: I was fearfully - mistaken. Self-willed and passionate and arrogant, I disdained your advice, I scorned your council—God forgive me, I see it all now, mother. There was a wild thirst for glory, a maddening desire for fame, for the empty and profitless renown of a conqueror; and for these, my mother, I have become a shedder of human blood, an oppressor of the deeply injured. Think of me, mother, pray for me—in the dim watches of the night, and in the bright noonday—my best and truest friend, and dearest—yes dearest, now that she, whose love was my glory, and the fancied possession of whose heart my happiness, hath proved herself so utterly faithless!"

Lord Percy paused. From a small golden case, appended to his neck, he unclasped a miniature, and held it up so that the moonbeams might fall brightly upon it. It was the delineation of a very lovely face. The small, feminine head was thrown back somewhat disdainfully, and the proud chiselling of the delicate features told that she was one of England's aristocracy. A few bright curls lay lovingly on her fair cheek, and the whole picture breathed forth the spirit of beauty and stateliness.

As the young man gazed thereon, there came an unwonted glistening of the eye, and presently a large tear slowly forced its way down his pale cheek: "Fie on me!" he exclaimed, "I am grown a very woman in weakness!—and yet, and yet—I did so love thee, Madeline. I did so fondly treasure every kind word, every gentle action—and I proudly claimed thee my affianced bride. Heaven help thee, and forgive thee, faithless!—and even now, while in the deep forest I linger thus alone, where dost thou roam, Madeline? Perchance in the lighted hall, amidst music and festivity, thou passest along smiling and glorying in thy beauty—a wondrous creature of loveliness. Are there no seasons of compunction, no moments of regret to shadow for an instant thy being's sky?—or art thou forever a thoughtless and a heartless coquette,

Madeline?"

He covered his face with his hands and leaned heavily forward. Since the one dreadful hour of their parting he had cloaked his feeling with his pride, and his voice had been as clear, his step as firm, and his spirit as reckless as ever; but there are moments when agony must vent itself, and suffering can remain pent up no longer. And such a moment had come to him now. Bitter and scalding drops fell slowly between his burning fingers, and his frame heaved with uncontrollable emotion. As scene by scene of happiness contrasted with misery, of the sunshine and the midnight, came home to this mind, more terrible grew the conflict. What were all past madness and sorrow—what were they to this?

It was a season of bitter and overwhelming agony, and yet it past. Gradually the dark clouds rolled from his spirit, and a calm, an unnatural calm, seemed to succeed them—the stillness of despair. Once more he drew his hands away from his face, and raised it to the placid moonlight. A moment may suffice to alter the whole current of the feelings, and leave the dreadful impress of the Sirocco upon the face. How fearfully changed was 'his. Madness and terrible agony—the whirlwind and the storm—had done their work of ravage well.

An hour passed on. The weariness following the unwonted turmoil of mind, together with the incessant activity of a soldier's life, weighed down his eyelids, and he leaned back against the projecting rock, and sank for awhile into a heavy slumber. The torturing images of his waking thoughts did not, at first, molest his dreams. Many a smile broke like sunshine upon his young lip, many a half-murmured sentence of fondness and joy attested a return of his long absent pleasant fancies. Thus ran his dreams:

He was in a fine old park, the green and sloping grounds of his beloved Alnwick, and the sun of a bright day gleamed here -and there, among the verdant shade, as the thick concave of green above was pierced by his

effulgent rays. The perfume of many delicate and fragrant flowers was on the air, and birds of glorious plumage were trilling around him their y most delicious notes. And there, in the gardens of his own home. Lord Percy roamed again, supporting on his arm that parent, who was the object of so many waking thoughts. No sorrow, no blight seemed to have visited him there, and life, to him, was full of joyful hope and gladness. Again—and he was in the presence of two fair girls, one his own dear sister, and the other his affianced bride. The name of Madeline was fondly breathed, and he bent his head to press the hand he held in his; but when he looked again around him' they were there alone, and she wore a haughty and careless look, and spoke words of cutting and bitter irony. And they parted; she with a cold undimmed eye, and he in the fiery vehemence of passion and disappointment. The peaceful and quiet tenor of his dreams was gone. And now he stood under, the vaulted roof of an old courtyard, caparisoned as for a hasty march. His steed was pawing by his side, his followers, with doffed caps, stood silently waiting his commands. And sorrowing kindred and friends were around him—the stateliest of England's nobility. His own white plume hung heavy on his brow, and none might know but him the stem sorrow of his own bosom; yet, like his valorous and impetuous ancestor, with a cheering word and a gay farewell, all mockery as they were, he vaulted to his saddle, and away from his father's halls he sped.

Then followed dim and indistinct visions of the deep blue sea, and a full-manned frigate; of landing on a strange shore; of midnight marches; of bloody battles and burning villages; the agonized look of many a childless mother, and many a fatherless child. Weeks, months, seemed to have elapsed, and he had almost forgotten those parting scenes amidst the increasing confusion of his vision.

At last, as if by magic, the mists wept from before his eyes, and he was riding at the head of an armed band toward a scene of sanguinary conflict. It was in the full broad glare of noonday, and a gentle stream lay basking in the sun's rays. Around the forests, mighty and old, stretched their umbrageous

foliage, and in an opening with a broad-swelling lawn before it, rose the walls of an humble house of worship. It was a simple scene, yet with its waving fields of corn and fresh-mown meadows, a lovely one; yet, why it was, that as the dreamer gazed for the first time upon it, a strange thrill, a shuddering emotion, such as he had never before experienced, seemed to agitate him, as by an overwhelming impulse he was carried swiftly onward into the very heart of the battle, Amidst the Hash and the smoke and the thundering volley of artillery, where the boldest might shudder and turn back, with a reckless disregard of consequences, he felt himself pre-eminent amidst the foremost, while the air resounded, with the groan, the shrill death cry and the maddening shriek. There was horror too in his own heart, for his steps were marked with the bodies of the slain, and the sward grass below grew crimson with human gore. And on that river, that once gentle and lucid stream, floated an empurpled current, deep-dyed with the life blood of American patriots and British soldiery. Yet onward, with a brain on fire, and a heart maddened within him, under the influence of that strange spell, onward he sped. Suddenly he felt a faintness and a dizziness overpower him. Something had pierced him like cold steel, and glancing downward he saw his own blood gushing in a warm stream from his side.. He reeled in his saddle and fell heavily to the ground. And there he lay, uncared for, unthought of, amidst the general conflict; a dying man. The terrible agony of spirit—the death- wound pains—the rushing world of thought—the suspense, the uncertainty of the future—the lingering hope — the murmured prayer for grace—the desolation, the anguish of the present. He felt them all, as he lay upon the red, wet earth, with many a dying fellow soldier beside him. Strange chills crept over him, and short and gaspingly came his breath, until, as with a convulsive effort, he half rose from the ground, and the dreamer awoke from that horrible trance. He had thrown himself forward, his head bent partly beneath his shoulders, and lay prone to the earth.

Lord Percy rose a changed man: " It was a warning," he murmured, " I know it to be such. God aid me and forgive me! One of my princely race, a

descendant of the immortal Hotspur, to fall thus, unwept for, in a strange land!"

And as night after night that maddening dream tortured his sleep, the conviction grew strong with him, the possibility became a certainty—and despite the remonstrances of his brother officers, calmly and manfully he awaited the approach of death.

"It is in vain," he said, "it is in vain, and as I have felt for you a sincere friendship, I will bequeath you all some token whereby to remember one of the Percys."

And, in conformity with his words, he bestowed his horse upon one, his pistols upon another—and every article of his wardrobe, except his soldier's cloak, which he requested might be wrapt around him for the burial. It was a strange thing, and it startled all, that one so young and with such glorious prospects, should look on death so passively, should anticipate it without a shudder. Alas! for him the grave had lost its terrors, and life at best was but a weary state of probation.

On the eleventh day of September, 1777, was achieved a famous victory by the British, on the banks of the Brandywine. Lord Cornwallis drew away his forces in triumph, although many of his best and ablest officers lay slain. And amidst them all, with his soldier's cloak around him, was the youthful heir of Northumberland, beautiful even in death. They buried him—the princely born, as his dying lips desired, with the miniature of his 'false lady' resting upon his heart. And marvellous it was, that on that very morning, he had recognized the scene of conflict as the one so often visited in his dreams, although in reality a new and strange landscape.

And even now, though years have rolled onward like waves upon the broad sea of time, those who visit the battle ground of Brandywine, may still hear from the lips of a hoary-haired old man, the fate of Lord Percy, and view a

grass-grown hillock, thickly studded with the beautiful Brandywine " Forget me not," which, he will tell you, marks his final resting place.

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76.

THE BARON'S KNELL.

By H. DANA.

In the old town of Rudenberg there stands a square, massive, stone tower, green with moss, and shattered by centuries. The superstructure, according to tradition, was the work of the Evil One; and there is that in its gloomy old walls, the deep embrasures of the windows, and the scarred and blackened appearance of the building, which would seem to corroborate the legend. In this tower hangs a bell, of strange uncouth shape, but immoveably fixed in masonry, so that no living mortal has heard it toll. The tradition goes, that bell and tower had the same origin, in the bargain of some erring soul; but with whom the subtle enemy made the compact is not so certain. Some assert that it was an Eastern Magi, skilled in all the learning of the Chaldees. Others say that it was a fair-haired lady from beyond the seas, one whose queenly port and dazzling beauty seemed almost supernatural. And others again say that the old tower was the residence of a bearded warrior who had fought in the Holy Land, and who brought back with him a train of Saracen servants, dressed with barbarous magnificence, and speaking in an uncouth tongue. But all agree in one thing. The first possessor of the place attained unbounded opulence, but died miserably, after every descendant in the direct line had perished by violence. And strangest of all, the wizard bell tolled at every death, as if rung by invisible hands. But from the day when the last of the race perished, no mortal ear has heard the knell.

It was from a student at Leyden that I first received the true version of the legend. We had been sitting over a stoop of wine all the evening, leisurely smoking our meerschaums, until at length we fell mutually into a reverie which lasted a full hour. The room where We sat was one of those large old rambling apartments found in antique buildings, with grotesquely carved cornices, and ample fire-places surrounded with dragon heads. The fire had been suffered to burn low, so that at length the chamber was left in comparative darkness. Now and then a falling brand would cause the flames to leap fitfully up, making strange shadows on the wall; while ever and anon the sullen gusts without rattled the old casements, and wailed mournfully around the house. Suddenly the bell of the cathedral began to toll, and as the measured sound came booming across the night, we started involuntarily.

" Have you ever been at Rudenberg?" said my companion.

"Yes!" I replied, "and from your words, you were thinking of the strange old tower, with its bell."

" I was," he answered, lowering his voice, have you ever heard the legend?"

I told him the versions that had been given me, but life shook his- head.

" They are none of them right. I believe one of my ancestors was present at the catastrophe, and so the true tradition has come down in our family.- We rarely mention it, Goth gebe uns Gnade but you are a foreigner, and I will waive our secrecy for once.

" The real builder of that tower," he continued, drawing his chair close to mine, and speaking in a low, but distinct tone, " was a needy Baron of the palatinate, who suddenly rose to great power and opulence. The superstructure was built by torch light, and with almost incredible rapidity.

But the greatest mystery attended the hanging of this strange bell, for no mortal eye, it is said, witnessed the act. The bell was found one morning swinging high up in the old tower; but, for many a long year, no one heard its voice. When the bells of the churches chimed out at wedding and christening, it remained silent. Other bells might toll at funerals, but not so it. While every steeple and tower in the palatinate rang merrily at victory, the iron tongue of that unknown bell spoke not. Men came finally to look on it with strange awe. At length the townsfolk heard a wild toll at midnight, and their blood curdled at the sound, so unlike all others was its unearthly tone. There was that in the voice of the mysterious bell, as if the insensate metal struggled to reveal some untold horror. Men shuddered as they listened, mothers hugged their babes to their bosoms, and maidens rose from bed and knelt before the crucifix until the fearful tolling ceased. That night few slept in Rudenberg. When morning dawned, the citizens learnt that, at midnight, just when the bell began to toll, the beautiful young daughter of the Baron had died, it was feared, by poison, administered by some unknown hand. And the bell had tolled at her death, but by whom the knell was wrung, no man could tell.

" From that day, it was noticed, that a dark shade settled on the brow of the Baron. Meantime his possessions continued to increase, and while others lost, he gained. Whatever enterprize he undertook was sure to succeed. But child after child perished violently, and at every death that mysterious bell was tolled by unknown hands. These things induced strange suspicions among the townsfolk. They called to mind the poverty from which the Baron had sprung, they remembered the singular rapidity with which the tower had been built, and they thought upon that fearful night when the mysterious bell broke its long silence, and tolled at the death of his child. Whispers, at first scarcely breathed, but finally given utterance to even in the market-place, charged him with having entered into a bargain with the Evil One; and it was said that wealth and power was to be the portion of the Baron, but that one by one he was to lose his children as the forfeit, and that the tolling of this unknown bell was to warn each victim that the hour

had come. At length these rumors reached the ears of the Baron. He listened to them without any reply except a sneer, but those who saw that sneer shuddered when they spoke of it to their dying day.

" Years passed, and castle after castle was added to the domains of the Baron; but, at every new acquisition another of his once fair family of children died.. One was drowned; another was killed while hunting; a third perished by the hand of an assassin; and the fourth and last, fell in a sudden fray; but though he died in a foreign country, and the news of his death did not reach the townsfolk for a week, they knew, by the tolling of the mysterious bell, that the last of the Baron's race was no more. The whispers of the citizens now became louder than ever. The Baron's wife had long since died, and it was said that his turn would arrive next. When they came to look back at the deaths of his progeny, they found that, by some strange coincidence, one of his children had perished on the same day, of the same month of each succeeding year; and it was predicted that, at the next anniversary, the Baron himself would die. But the stern old noble only scoffed at these whispers, and, as the day drew nigh, resolved to shew his scorn of the danger, by holding high festival in his castle. He caused, moreover, the bell, whose tolling had first produced these rumors, to be embedded in solid masonry, as you see it' now. so that no one could ring it. Then he made ready his feast.

" You must not suppose that every one shrunk, like the honest townsfolk, from the Baron's society. There were enough bold, bad men who laughed at what they called idle rumors, and were ever ready to pledge him in the wine cup, or follow him to the chase. Yet each of these men had some stigma attached to his name. One had plundered widows and orphans, a second had ravaged defenceless maidens, another was said to be a parricide, a fourth was suspected of sacrilege, a fifth had murdered his bride, and others had committed other acts, abhorred alike by God and man. On the countenance of each was written that at which holy eremites crossed themselves and prayed. And these men now gathered to the festival of their

chief, mocking at the rumors that daily gained strength.

"The hall where the festival was held was a wide apartment, with walls so gloomy, and casements so deep, that the cheerful beams of the sun rarely found entrance within, or only played in sickly radiance on the damp, stone floor. But though such was the usual aspect of the room it was different now. Lights blazed in fifty places from the walls. A table, covered with the richest plate, stretched down the ample hall. Never indeed had the palatinate beheld such an array of wealth, magnificence and profusion. Here was a rarely carved goblet from Italy, and there a Venice glass of unrivalled beauty; golden urns and dishes glittered along the board; and the drinking cups of the guests flashed with jewels. Every viand that taste could suggest, or skill prepare, was arranged for the feast, while the richest and costliest wines blushed in golden ewers at hand. Servants, magnificently attired, moved noiselessly over the floor; incense rose up from tripods burning at intervals along the walls; and strains of music, from unseen performers, floated around, and dissolved the listeners into ecstasy. Well might the guests, thus surrounded by all that could delight the senses, scoff at the fears of the people, and deem themselves safe from harm. But ever and anon, as the wandering eye of a guest lit on the cold, damp wall by some strange whim left bare of tapestry, he would shudder involuntarily, as if foreboding ill. These feelings, however, were rare, and did not interrupt the evening's hilarity. As the hours passed on, and the guests quaffed deeper of the glowing wine, their jests and songs and gaiety increased, until the hall rang with merriment. Many a wild deed was then related, at which good men would have turned pale, but which was hailed now with shouts; many a ribald song was sung, convulsing the listeners with unholy mirth. And thus hour after hour passed, while still the lights burned on the wall, the incense exhaled from the censers, and the music of the unseen performers filled the air. Midnight had come, when, with a scornful sneer, and then a gay mocking laugh, the Baron arose and spoke,

" Fill high your goblets,' he said, fill to the brim,' and as he spoke he poured

forth a bumper of the rich, red wine, while each guest followed his example. We will be merry tonight, brave sirs, in spite of the idle rumors of superstitious fools, and the lying prophecies of canting priests. Ho! midnight of the day, on which they said my race was to perish, has come, and yet here I stand, the last of that lineage, to mock at such fears. We will be merry tonight, gallants, and see whether the old bell can disturb our revellings. Better wine than this never crossed lip, nor ever did gayer company meet at festal board. Lo! give us a triumphal song, a gay and exulting strain. Now, fair guests, join hands, and drink, one and all, my toast, Confusion to the foul fiend.' Quaff—quaff."

" And they quaffed the wine, and, amid strains of triumphal music, with linked hands, they shouted back the toast But ere the huzza ceased, the slow, measured tolling of a bell filled the apartment, and, as the revellers listened, their cheeks blanched, and their voices died in their throats, for well they knew that fearful sound. The music stopped in terror, and a dead silence reigned throughout the hall. Again and again the toll of that bell clanged awfully across the night, and the lights waned to and fro, as if flared by gusts of air. Each man drew closer to his neighbor, and all gazed in wild affright at their host. At the first toll of the bell, the exulting sneer had passed from his lips, and he gazed fearfully around, as if hoping that his ears deceived him, yet dreading the contrary; but when that unearthly sound penetrated, a second time, into the hall and he saw, by the faces of the guests, that they too heard the knell, his countenance became ghastly as that of a corpse, and he clung to the table to support his tottering knees. And as the iron voice rung out again across the night, he uttered an agonizing cry, gasped for breath, and sinking down utterly into his seat, with the wine cup still in his hand, fell over at the twelfth stroke, dead on the floor. At the same moment the wind eddied through the casements, and the censers expired. Then mortal fear seized on the guests, and springing from the board, and climbing and struggling over each other, they hurried wildly from that fatal festal hall. As they rushed into the air, the room burst into flames. But they dared not look behind. With wilder affright they fled, while,

at every step, came, borne after them on the breeze, the tolling of that fearful bell. It palsied their hearts, it smote then- knees with weakness, it almost took from them their breath. At every stroke of that knell some long forgotten crime rose up to their memories. They paused not until they clasped, in supplicating agony, the rails beneath the high altar of the Cathedral.

" All night that bell, rung by, unknown hands, tolled on, curdling the blood of the listeners; and all night the shuddering guests prayed and knelt before the crucifix. When morning dawned, the bishop, preceded by the relics, and followed by his priests, entered the still smoking hall. They found the body of the Baron charred, blackened and mutilated ; the face only was untouched by fire. But on that countenance rested an expression of fierce and utter agony, such as haunted the dreams of those who saw it to the grave. From that fearful night the Baron's bell has never been known to toll, nor could a thousand men move it in its bed of solid masonry."